

THE CREW VIDEO LESSONS

THE STORY TELLING PROCESS – MAKING A TV COMMERCIAL

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INTRODUCTION: Video production is about story telling. In the same way that sentences are used in telling a written story, visual 'sentences' are used when a story is being told through a visual medium. In an essay each sentence builds on the last to give rise to a story. In the video medium the individual shots carry out the same function.

This exercise illustrates the similarities and develops a deeper understanding of the fundamental nature of the video production process. Students will require a basic knowledge of editing which can be done 'in camera' or on a computer system using a program like 'Final Cut' or 'imovie'

The exercise is designed for classes up to 30 and is best run in groups of 6. Of course this will Ofcourse depend of available equipment.

THE CHALLENGE: The aim of this lesson is to create a 30 second – 1 min. television commercial (to be aired in a G rated time slot!!)

THE CATCH: You only have a total of 75 minutes to complete you ad!! You can take up to 45 min to come up with a story idea, write a brief description of each shot and shoot your commercial. You will then have a further 30 min to edit in time for an impromptu 'in class video competition!

N.B. The key to the success of this exercise is to think out and describe your shots carefully before you start shooting --- THE CLOCK IS TICKING!!

NAME OF YOUR PRODUCTION GROUP (choose something funky – you don't want to get famous with a boring name)

COMMERCIAL OUTLINE (a brief description of what you are promoting and how you are going to do it. Be creative and have fun with this)

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SHOT DESCRIPTION There are official terms that industry people use to communicate shots to each other. Use them if you know them but at the end of the day the purpose of your description is to communicate the concept of the shot to other people. Be as brief and accurate as possible, use drawings if they help. Each shot description should also include any dialogue.

SHOT 1

SHOT 2

SHOT 3

SHOT 4

SHOT 5

ETC IF REQUIRED

TEACHERS NOTES

This exercise can be highly motivating, a lot of fun and at the same time orientate a student to some of the basic principles of video production. I turn it into a sort of 'VIDEO AWARDS GALA' event with a trophy as the first prize. Of course everyone except for the winning group ties for second place. The tip is to have enough 'freddo frogs' on standby to reward everyone.

Students are under a lot of time pressure to transform their thoughts into 'visual realities'. This generates excitement and motivation.

TIMING AND TECHNOLOGY The exercise is best carried out over a 90 min double period but could also be easily split into a series of lessons.

You can adapt this lesson to a range of available technologies. It is best carried out using digital camera and editing computers but can be equally successful using 'in camera' editing or even camera phones.

GROUP SIZE AND MAKE UP The lesson works well with a class of 24 divided up into groups of 6. Groups less than 5 don't seem to work very well as you often don't get the creative critical mass.

You can let the students form their own groups and most times this works well. Another approach is to construct your group ensuring each one has a computer minded person in it. This person will almost automatically take over the technical aspect of the editing process while the others contribute ideas.

PREPARATION Ideas as follows:

- 1) Make sure you have tapes for the cameras.
- 2) Make sure the batteries are charged.
- 3) Make sure you have all required cables for transfer from camera to computer. Good idea to test them prior to the lesson.
- 4) If you are using computers have the edit program running prior to class.
- 5) Good idea to have some random props on hand. These may include: butcher paper, several large cardboard boxes, random outfits from the local op shop (the more random the better) several hats eg police, chef, sailor, etc obtained from a party hire place for a few dollars, several different coloured lengths of material or drapes etc.
- 6) Make sure the students know where they can and can't go!!

FOLLOW UP – junior class For a junior class the students can describe the shots used in a commercial on television that night. They can then write a paragraph on how successful the ad was and what approach was used to sell it's product.

FOLLOW UP – senior class. In the process of shooting their own adds the students will almost invariably use some of the standard manipulative tools common to the advertising industry. In discussion the following day the students view their ads again and start to deconstruct the underlying purpose behind their choice of shots and their approach to their production.

On analysis of other commercials (teacher prepared or homework) students are guided to begin to link production (story telling) techniques used to manipulate an audience for a desired outcome. This of course will raise the issue of ethics of production. What are the unintended outcomes of using manipulative tools to sell a product? This discussion can be highly poignant!

We would love to hear about your successes (or otherwise) and we would also love to see your resulting clips. Have fun and all the best!

For more resources log on to:

www.thecrew.net.au

and watch 'THE CREW' Mondays 5.00pm SBS Television